A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE of GREAT BRITAIN FROM THE DELAGATES OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS IN *PHILADELPHIA.*

To be had at ANDREWS's Printing-Office, No. 12, Little *Eastcheap*, near the *Monument*; and at the Pamphlet Shops at the *Royal-Exchange*.

[Price, Two-Pence.]

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A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE of GREAT BRITAIN, FROM THE DELEGATES,

Appointed by the ſeveral Engliſh Colonies, to conſider of their Grievances in General Congreſs, at Philadelphia, September 5th, 1774.

Friends and Fellow Subjects,

WHEN a Nation, led to greatneſs by the hand of Liberty, and poſſeſſed of all the glory that heroiſm, munificence, and humanity can beſtow, deſcends to the ungrateful taſk of forging chains for her Friends and Children, and inſtead of giving ſupport to Freedom, turns advocate for Slavery and Oppreſſion, there is reaſon to ſuſpect ſhe has either ceaſed to be virtuous, or been extremely negligent in the appointment of her rulers.

In almoſt every age, in repeated conflicts, in long and bloody wars, as well civil as foreign, againſt many and powerful nations, againſt the open aſſaults of enemies and the more dangerous treachery

of friends, have the inhabitants of your iſland, your great and glorious anceſtors, maintained their independance and tranſmitted the rights of men and the bleſſings of liberty to you their poſterity.

Be not ſurprized therefore, that we, who are deſcended from the ſame common anceſtors; that we, whoſe forefathers participated in all the rights, the liberties and the conſtitution, you ſo juſtly boaſt, and who have carefully conveyed the ſame fair inheritance to us, guarantied by the plighted faith of government, and the moſt ſolemn compacts with Britiſh Sovereigns, ſhould refuſe to ſurrender them to men, who found their claims on no principles of reaſon, and who proſecute them with a deſign, that by having our lives and property in their power, they may with the greater facility enſlave you.

The cauſe of America is now the object of univerſal attention: It has at length become very ſerious. This unhappy country has not only been oppreſſed, but abuſed and miſrepreſented; and the duty we owe to ourſelves and poſterity, to your intereſt, and the general welfare of the Britiſh empire, leads us to addreſs you on this very important ſubject.

Know then, That we conſider ourſelves, and do inſiſt, that we are, and ought to be, as free as our fellow ſubjects in Britain, and that no power on earth has a right to take our property from us without our conſent.

That we claim all the benefits ſecured to the ſubject by the Engliſh conſtitution, and particularly that ineſtimable one of trial by jury.

That we hold it eſſential to Engliſh Liberty, that no man be condemned unheard, or puniſhed for ſuppoſed offences, without having an opportunity of making his defence.

That

That we think the Legiſlature of Great-Britain is not authorized by the conſtitution to eſtabliſh a religion, fraught with ſanguinary and impious tenets, or, to erect an arbitrary form of government in any quarter of the globe. Theſe rights, we, as well as you, deem ſacred. And yet ſacred as they are, they have, with many others, been repeatedly and flagrantly violated.

Are not the Proprietors of the ſoil of Great-Britain Lords of their own property? Can it be taken from them without their conſent? Will they yield it to the arbitrary diſpoſal of any man, or number of men whatever?—You know they will not.

Why then are the Proprietors of the ſoil of America leſs Lords of their property than you are of yours, or why ſhould they ſubmit it to the diſpoſal of your Parliament, or any other Parliament, or Council in the world, not of their election? Can the intervention of the ſea that divides us, cauſe diſparity in rights, or can any reaſon be given, why Engliſh ſubjects, who live three thouſand miles from the royal palace, ſhould enjoy leſs liberty than thoſe who are three hundred miles diſtant from it?

Reaſon looks with indignation on ſuch diſtinctions, and freemen can never perceive their propriety. And yet, however chimerical and unjuſt ſuch diſcriminations are, the Parliament aſſert, that they have a right to bind us in all caſes without exception, whether we conſent or not; that they may take and uſe our property when and in what manner they pleaſe; that we are penſioners on their bounty for all that we poſſeſs, and can hold it no longer than they vouchſafe to permit. Such declarations we conſider as hereſies in Engliſh politics, and which can no more operate to deprive us of our property, than the interdicts of the Pope can diveſt

Kings

Kings of ſceptres which the laws of the land and the voice of the people have placed in their hands.

At the concluſion of the late war—a war rendered glorious by the abilities and integrity of a Miniſter, to whoſe efforts the Britiſh empire owes its ſafety and its fame: At the concluſion of this war, which was ſucceeded by an inglorious peace, formed under the auſpices of a Miniſter of principles, and of a family unfriendly to the Proteſtant cauſe, and inimical to liberty,—We ſay at this period, and under the influence of that man, a plan for enſlaving your fellow ſubjects in America was concerted, and has ever ſince been pertinaciouſly carrying into execution.

Prior to this æra you were content with drawing from us the wealth produced by our commerce. You reſtrained our trade in every way that could conduce to your emolument. You exerciſed unbounded ſovereignty over the ſea. You named the ports and nations to which alone our merchandize ſhould be carried, and with whom alone we ſhould trade; and though ſome of theſe reſtrictions were grievous, we nevertheleſs did not complain; we looked up to you as to our parent ſtate, to which we were bound by the ſtrongeſt ties: And were happy in being inſtrumental to your proſperity and your grandeur.

We call upon you yourſelves, to witneſs our loyalty and attachment to the common intereſt of the whole empire: Did we not, in the laſt war, add all the ſtrength of this vaſt continent to the force which repelled our common enemy? Did we not leave our native ſhores, and meet diſeaſe and death, to promote the ſucceſs of Britiſh arms in foreign climates? Did you not thank us for our zeal, and even reimburſe us large ſums of money, which you confeſſed, we had advanced

beyond

beyond our porportion and far beyond our abilities? You did.

To what cauſes, then, are we to attribute the ſudden change of treatment, and that ſyſtem of ſlavery which was prepared for us at the reſtoration of peace?

Before we had recovered from the diſtreſſes which ever attend war, an attempt was made to drain this country of all its money, by the oppreſſive Stamp-act. Paint, Glaſs, and other commodities, which you would not permit us to purchaſe of other nations, were taxed; nay, although no wine is made in any country ſubject to the Britiſh ſtate, you prohibited our procuring it of foreigners, without paying a tax, impoſed by your parliament, on all we imported. Theſe and many other impoſitions were laid uppon us moſt unjuſtly and unconſtitutionally, for the expreſs purpoſe of raiſing a revenue.—In order to ſilence complaint, it was, indeed, provided, that this revenue ſhould be expended in America for its protection and defence.—Theſe exactions however can receive no juſtification from a pretended neceſſity of proecting and defending us. They are laviſhly ſquandered on court favourites and miniſterial dependants, generally avowed enemies to America and employing themſelves, by partial repreſentations, to traduce and embroil the Colonies. For the neceſſary ſupport of goverment here, we ever were and ever ſhall be ready to provide. And whenever the exegincies of the ſtate may require it, we ſhall, as we have heretofore done, chearfully contribute our full proportion of men and money. To enforce this unconſtitutional and unjuſt ſcheme of taxation, every fence that the wiſdom of our Britiſh anceſtors had carefully erected againſt arbi-

trary

trary power, has been violently thrown down in America, and the ineſtimable right of trial by jury taken away in caſes that touch both life and property. It was ordained, that whenever offences ſhould becommitted in the Colonies againſt particular Acts impoſing various duties and reſtrictions upon trade, the proſecutor might bring his action for the pennalties in the Courts of Admiralty; by which means the ſubject loſt the advantage of being tried by an honeſt uninfluenced jury of the vicinage, and was ſubjected to the ſad neceſſety of being judged by a ſingle man a creature of the Crown, and according to the courſe of a law which exempts the proſecutor from the trouble of proving his accuſation, and obliges the defendant either to evince his innocence or to ſuffer. To give this new indicatory the greater importance, and as, if with deſign to protect falſe accuſers, it is further provided, that the Judge's certificate of there having been probable cauſes of ſeizure and proſecution ſhall protect the proſecutor from actions at common law for recovery of damages.

By the courſe of our law, offences committed in ſuch of the Britiſh dominions in which courts are eſtabliſhed and juſtice duly and regularly adminiſtered, ſhall be there tried by a jury of the vicinage. There the offenders and the witneſſes are known, and the degree of credibility to be given to their teſtimony, can be aſcertained.

In all theſe Colonies, juſtice is regularly and impartially adminiſtered, and yet by the conſtruction of ſome, and the direction of other Acts of Parliament, offenders are to be taken by force, together with all ſuch perſons as may be pointed out as witneſſes, and carried to England, there to be tried in a diſtant land, by a *jury* of ſtrangers,

and

and ſubject to all the diſadvantages that reſult from want of friends, want of witneſſes, and want of money.

When the deſign of raiſing a revenue from the duties impoſed on the importation of tea into America, had in great meaſure been rendered abortive by our ceaſing to import that commodity, a ſcheme was concerted by the Miniſtry with the Eaſt-India Company, and an Act paſſed enabling and encourageing them to tranſport and vend it in the Colonies. Aware of the danger of giving ſucceſs to this inſidious manœuvre, and of permitting a precedent of taxation thus to be eſtabliſhed among us, various methods were adopted to elude the ſtroke. The people of Boſton, then ruled by a Governor, whom, as well as his predeceſſor, Sir Francis Bernard, all America conſiders as her enemy were exceedingly embarraſſed. The ſhips which had arrived with the tea were by his management prevented from returning.—The duties would have been paid; the cargoes landed and expoſed to ſale; a Governor's influence would have procured and protected many purchaſers. While the town was ſuſpended by deliberations on this important ſubject, the tea was deſtroyed. Even ſuppoſing a treſpaſs was thereby committed, and the Proprietors of the tea entitled to damages—The Courts of law were open, and Judges appointed by the Crown preſided in them.——The Eaſt-India Company however did not think proper to commence any ſuits, nor did they even demand ſatisfaction either from individuals or from the community in general. The Miniſtry, it ſeems, officiouſly made the caſe their own, and the great Council of the nation deſcended to intermeddle with a diſpute about private property. Divers papers, letters, and other unauthenticated

ticated *exparte* evidence were laid before them; neither the perſons who deſtroyed the Tea, or the people of Boſton, were called upon to anſwer the complaint. The Miniſtry, incenſed by being diſappointed in a favourite ſcheme, were determined to recur from the little arts of fineſſe, to open force and unmanly violence. The port of Boſton was blocked up by a fleet, and an army placed in the town: Their trade was to be ſuſpended, and thouſands reduced to the neceſſity of gaining ſubſiſtance from charity, till they ſhould ſubmit to paſs under the yoke, and conſent to become ſlaves, by confeſſing the omnipotence of Parliament, and acquieſcing in whatever diſpoſition they might think proper to make of their lives and property.

Let juſtice and humanity ceaſe to be the boaſt of your nation! Conſult your hiſtory, examine your records of former tranſactions, nay turn to the annals of the many arbitrary ſtates and kingdoms that ſurround you, and ſhew us a ſingle inſtance of men being condemned to ſuffer for imputed crimes, unheard, unqueſtioned, and without even the ſpecious formality of a trial; and that too by laws made expreſsly for the purpoſe, and which had no exiſtence at the time of the fact committed. If it be difficult to reconcile theſe proceedings to the genius and temper of your laws and conſtitution, the taſk will become more arduous when we call upon our miniſterial enemies to juſtify, not only condemning men untried, and by hearſay, but involving the innocent in one common puniſhment with the guilty, and for the act of thirty or forty, to bring poverty, diſtreſs, and calamity on thirty thouſand ſouls, and thoſe not your enemies, but your friends, brethren, and fellow ſubjects.

It would be ſome conſolation to us, if the catalogue of American oppreſſions ended here. It gives us pain to be reduced to the neceſſity of reminding you, that under the confidence repoſed in the faith of government, pledged in a royal charter from a Britiſh Sovereign, the fore-fathers of the preſent inhabitants of the Maſſachuſett's-Bay left their former habitations, and eſtabliſhed that great, flouriſhing, and loyal Colony. Without incurring or being charged with a forfeiture of their rights, without being heard, without being tried, without law, and without juſtice, by an Act of Parliament, their charter is deſtroyed, their liberties violated, their conſtitution and form of government changed: and all this upon no better pretence, than becauſe in one of their towns a treſpaſs was committed on ſome merchandize, ſaid to belong to one of the Companies, and becauſe the Miniſtry were of opinion, that ſuch high political regulations were neceſſary to compel due ſubordination and obedience to their mandates.

Nor are theſe the only capital grievances under which we labour. We might tell of diſſolute, weak and wicked Governors having been ſet over us; of Legiſlatures being ſuſpended for aſſerting the rights of Britiſh ſubjects—of needy and ignorant dependents on great men, advanced to the ſeats of juſtice, and to other places of truſt and importance—of hard reſtrictions on commerce, and a great variety of leſſer evils, the recollection of which, is almoſt loſt under the weight and preſſure of greater and more poignant calamities.

Now mark the progreſſion of the miniſterial plan for enſlaving us.

Well aware that ſuch hardy attempts to take our property from us; to deprive us of that valuable

right

right of trial by jury; to ſeize our perſons, and carry us for trial to Great Britain; to blockade our ports; to deſtroy our Charters, and change our forms of government, would occaſion, and had already occaſioned, great diſcontent in all the Colonies, which might produce oppoſition to theſe meaſures: An Act was paſſed to protect, indemnify, and ſcreen from puniſhment ſuch as might be guilty even of murder, in endeavouring to carry their oppreſſive edicts into execution: And by another Act the dominion of Canada is to be ſo extended, modelled, and governed, as that by being diſunited from us, detached from our intereſts, by civil as well as religious prejudices, that by their numbers daily ſwelling with Catholic emigrants from Europe, and by their devotion to Adminiſtration ſo friendly to their religion, they might become formidable to us, and on occaſion, be fit inſtruments in the hands of power, to reduce the ancient free Proteſtant Colonies to the ſame ſtate of ſlavery with themſelves.

This was evidently the object of the Act:—And in this view being extremely dangerous to our liberty and quiet, we cannot forbear complaining of it, as hoſtile to Britiſh America.—Superadded to theſe conſiderations, we cannot help deploring the unhappy condition to which it has reduced the many Engliſh ſettlers, who, encouraged by the Royal Proclamation, promiſing the enjoyment of all their rights, have purchaſed eſtates in that country.—They are now the ſubjects of an arbitrary government, deprived of trial by jury, and when impriſoned cannot claim the benefit of the habeas corpus Act, that great bulwark and palladium of Engliſh liberty: Nor can we ſuppreſs our aſtoniſhment, that a Britiſh Parliament ſhould ever conſent to eſtabliſh in that country a religion that has deluged

luged your iſland in blood, and diſperſed impiety, bigotry, perſecution, murder and rebellion through every part of the world.

This being a true ſtate of facts, let us beſeech you to conſider to what end they lead.

Admit that the Miniſtry, by the powers of Britain, and the aid of our Roman Catholic neighbours, ſhould be able to carry the point of taxation, and reduce us to a ſtate of perfect humiliation and ſlavery. Such an enterprize would doubtleſs, make ſome addition to your national debt, which already preſſes down your liberties, and fills you with Penſioners and Placemen.—We preſume, alſo, that your commerce will ſomewhat be diminiſhed. However, ſuppoſe you ſhould prove victorious ---in what condition will you then be? What advantages or what laurels will you reap from ſuch a conqueſt?

May not a Miniſtry with the ſame armies enſlave you—it may be ſaid, you will ceaſe to pay them---but remember the taxes from America, the wealth, and we may add, the men, and particularly the Roman Catholics of this vaſt continent, will then be in the power of your enemies---nor will you have any reaſon to expect, that after making ſlaves of us, many among us ſhould refuſe to aſſiſt in reducing you to the ſame abject ſtate.

Do not treat this as chimerical---Know that in leſs than half a century, the quit-rents reſerved to the Crown, from the numberleſs

grants

grants of this vaſt continent, will pour large ſtreams of wealth into the royal coffers, and if to this be added the power of taxing America at pleaſure, the Crown will be rendered independant on you for ſupplies, and will poſſeſs more treaſure than may be neceſſary to purchaſe the *remains of* liberty in your Iſland. —In a word, take care that you do not fall into the pit that is preparing for us.

We believe there is yet much virtue, much juſtice, and much public ſpirit in the Engliſh nation----To that juſtice we now appeal. You have been told that we are ſeditious, impatient of government, and deſirous of independancy. Be aſſured that theſe are not facts, but calumnies.——Permit us to be as free as yourſelves, and we ſhall ever eſteem a union with you to be our greateſt glory and our greateſt happineſs, we ſhall ever be ready to contribute all in our power to the welfare of the Empire---we ſhall conſider your enemies as our enemies, and your intereſt as our own.

But if you are determined that your Miniſters ſhall wantonly ſport with the rights of mankind---If neither the voice of juſtice, the dictates of the law, the principles of the conſtitution, or the ſuggeſtions of humanity can reſtrain your hands from ſhedding human blood in ſuch an impious cauſe, we muſt then tell you, that we never will ſubmit to be hewers of wood or drawers of water for any miniſtry or nation in the world. Place

Place us in the ſame ſituation that we were at the cloſe of the laſt war, and our former harmony will be reſtored,

But leſt the ſame ſupineſs and the ſame inattention to our common intereſt, which you have for ſeveral years ſhewn, ſhould continue, we think it prudent to anticipate the conſequences.

By the deſtruction of the trade of Boſton, the Miniſtry have endeavoured to induce ſubmiſſion to their meaſures.—The like fate may befal us all, we will endeavour therefore to live without trade, and recur for ſubſiſtence to the fertility and bounty of our native ſoil, which will afford us all the neceſſaries and ſome of the conveniencies of life.—We have ſuſpended our importation from Great Britain and Ireland; and in leſs than a year's time, unleſs our grievances ſhould be redreſſed, ſhall diſcontinue our exports to thoſe kingdoms and the Weſt-Indies.

It is with the utmoſt regret however, that we find ourſelves compelled by the overruling principles of ſelf-preſervation, to adopt meaſures detrimental in their conſequences to numbers of our fellow ſubjects in Great-Britain and Irelend. But we hope, that the magnanimity and juſtice of the Britiſh Nation will furniſh a Parliament of ſuch wiſdom, independance and public ſperit, as may ſave the violated rights of the whole empire from the devices

devices of wicked Miniſters and evil Counſellors, whether in or out of office, and thereby reſtore that harmony, friendſhip and fraternal affection between all the Inhabitants of his Majeſty's kingdoms and territories, ſo ardently wiſhed for by every true and honeſt American.

By order of the Congreſs,

HENRY MIDDELTON, Preſident.

October, 26th, 1774.